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Bi-541
Feb. '21

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION FOR ERADICATING RATS.

Control of rodents is best effected through community cooperation, and organization should be under the direction of a committee representing local civic organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau, Board of Trade, Board of Education, or Departmental heads. Communities, both rural and urban, should be divided into precincts, school districts, city block, or group of city blocks, each division to be under the direction of a captain and such assistants as are necessary to conduct a complete organization. The aim should be to develop a permanent organization, to be supported by cooperating State and Federal Departments. Such campaigns should be outlined to cover a definite period of time and naturally lead up to important repressive measures and more concrete methods of permanent rat control. Campaigns of short duration should not be undertaken.

FUNDS

Money for such campaigns should be provided by public subscription, and all should be encouraged to contribute. Such funds should be paid out as prizes rather than bounties, as this will create a friendly rivalry, stimulating contestants to the utmost without quickly exhausting the funds, as in the case of paid bounties. Prizes should be offered for all phases of rat control, such as the greatest number of rats taken, the cleanest district, the greatest number of garbage cans installed, essays by school children on life history, habits, and control of the rat, and for simple rat-proofing work. Funds can be used for the wholesale purchase of traps and poison if desired.

IMPORTANT MEASURES TO GUIDE CAMPAIGNS.

Important points to strive for in campaigns are cleanliness in markets, stores, warehouses, slaughter houses, alleys, stables, vacant lots, and dwellings, storage in rat-proof containers of waste, garbage, and manure, and prompt removal of the same daily; destruction of old straw or other trash piles, and the wrecking of old sheds, buildings, and walks; piling of lumber, wood, etc., in close stacks at a distance of 18 inches above ground.

RAT-PROOFING.

Provisions, grain, and food stuffs should be protected in rat-proof buildings and containers. In rat-proofing granaries, hog pens, poultry houses, dwellings, and stables, quarter-inch steel or wire mesh, sheet metal, or concrete may be used, close attention being paid to ventilation-traps, eaves, and doors, and the lower floors of buildings.

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PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL ENEMIES OF RATS.

Hawks, owls, and small predatory animals are natural enemies of rats.

TRAPS.

Where traps are depended upon, a large number should be used, frequently 100 or more to the farm or warehouse. The guillotine type of trap is recommended. Traps should be baited with fresh meat, fish, bacon, sausage, cheese, vegetables, or fruit. Baits should be large and secured by tying to the trigger plate. Traps should be looked at at least three times each day.

The large French cage trap is very good for use in stables, warehouses, and sewers. Pre-baiting should be followed for several nights before closing the trap, using baits of any food material in large quantity suspended by wire from the top of the trap on the inside. Traps should be covered with an old cloth or bag.

POISONS.

Two kinds of poison are used against rats -- barium carbonate, in occupied houses or buildings; strychnine (sulphate), for outside work. In the use of poisons care must be exercised to protect children, domestic animals, and fowls. All rats collected for counting should be crepated or buried two feet deep and not thrown into the streets or highways.

